

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 9287

PASS DEFENSE AND COMMERCE

REF: LAGOS 9013

SUMMARY: NORTHROP AIRCRAFT REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS NAF PLANNING BUY SUPERSONIC FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, AND HE BELIEVES NORTHROP F-5E HAS 50-50 CHANCE OF BEING SELECTED. IN VIEW SUBSTANTIAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH SALE, EMBASSY BELIEVES SALE SHOULD BE SUPPORTED. REQUEST WASHINGTON VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT, KIND AND DEGREE OF WASHINGTON AND EMBASSY SUPPORT CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, AND WHETHER CONTE-LONG OR OTHER RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION MIGHT BE APPLICABLE. END SUMMARY

1. WILLIAM A. ROTHWELL, NORTHROP REGIONAL MANAGER FOR AFRICA, WHO HAS VISITED LAGOS SEVERAL TIMES IN PAST YEAR, REPORTS ON BASIS DIRECT CONTACTS WITH NIGERIAN AIR FORCE (NAF) OFFICERS THAT NAF HAS DECIDED TO BUY SUPERSONIC FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AND IS CONSIDERING NORTHROP F-5E, MIRAGE V OR F-1, JAGUAR, VIGGEN AND MIG 21. ROTHWELL BELIEVES NORTHROP HAS BETTER THAN 50-50 CHANCE OF WINNING CONTRACT FOR ABOUT FIFTEEN F-5E AIRCRAFT FOR A TOTAL PACKAGE OF ROUGHLY EIGHT MILLION DOLLARS. DECISION MAY BE MADE BY END MARCH 1974.

2. ROTHWELL PLANS VISIT STATE AND DOD ABOUT DECEMBER 1 TO DISCUSS SALE AND SEEK USG APPROVAL AND SUPPORT. HE TOLD US HE HAS LICENSE TO EXPORT TECHNICAL DATA ON F -5E. (REFTEL REQUESTED COPY OF LICENSE.

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ROTHWELL SAID HE REALIZES THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF FMS SALE
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AND NORTHROP WOULD PROBABLY LOSE OUT TO MORE FAVORABLE MIRAGE

CREDIT TERMS IF AIRCRAFT WERE PURCHASED ON CREDIT BASIS, BUT HE HAS IMPRESSION FMG MAY PAY CASH FOR PLANES , THUS ENHANCING NORTHROP CHANCES. FURTHER STATES PRINCIPAL USG "SUPPORT" DESIRED IS APPROVAL OF SALE AND EXPORT OF AIRCRAFT TO NIGERIA AND ASSURANCE OF CONTINUED SPARE PARTS SUPPLY.

3. COMMENT: NAF PURCHASE OF SUPERSONICS HAS BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION SOMETIME AND IS BECOMING MORE PRESSING IN VIEW INOPERABLE STATE OF CURRENT NAF STABLE OF MIG-17 AIRCRAFT. SIGNIFICANT NAF JET PILOT TRAINING CONTINUES IN U.S., AND THEY WILL NEED AIRCRAFT TO FLY. FMG MIGHT ALSO WISH MOVE AHEAD WITH LARGE TICKET ITEM BEFORE IT TURNS OVER CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT TO CIVILIAN REGIME, PROMISED FOR 1976.

4. SINCE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR,FMG HAS BOUGHT NO MILITARY HARDWARE FROM U.S., REMEMBERING LACK OF U.S. SUPPORT AT THAT TIME AND HARBORING CONCERN ABOUT RELIABILITY OF SPARE PARTS SUPPLY IN HYPOTHETICAL FUTURE CRISIS. PURCHASE OF U.S. FIGHTERS NOW WOULD REPRESENT INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN U.S., AND SATISFACTORY EXPERIENCE WITH AIRCRAFT MIGHT OPEN WAY TO FURTHER SALES OF U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT, NIGERIA HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS IN AFRICA AND HAS BEEN GENERALLY RESTRAINED IN PURCHASE OF MILITARY HARDWARE IN PAST THREE YEARS.

5. F-5E SALE WOULD OFFER OBVIOUS BENEFITS FOR U.S. IN TERMS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND DOMESTIC ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. ON OTHER HAND, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IN U.S. INTEREST TO ENCOURAGE BUILDUP OF NIGERIAN MILITARY FORCES AND CAPABILITY OR DIVERSION OF EXCESSIVE AMOUNT OF NIGERIA RESOURCES FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO MILITARY PURPOSES. IF, HOWEVER, FMG IS GENUINELY DETERMINED ACQUIRE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FROM ONE SOURCE OR ANOTHER WE WOULD ACCOMPLISH LITTLE BY WITHHOLDING APPROVAL OF NORTHROP SALE AND WOULD LOSE NOT ONLY THE BUSINESS BUT ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH NIGERIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. ON BALANCE, EMBASSY BELIEVES NORTHROP SHOULD RECEIVE USG APPROVAL FOR SALE OF REASONABLE NUMBER OF F-5E'S WITH ASSURANCE OF SPARE PARTS SUPPLY.

6. EMBASSY/DAO/AID WOULD APPRECIATE WASHINGTON VIEWS ON GENERAL SUBJECT AND GUIDANCE ON: (A) STANCE MISSION SHOULD TAKE VIS-A-VIS ROTHWELL AND FMG IN THIS MATTER; (B) FACTORS WASHINGTON CONSIDERS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE RELATING TO EXPORT OF F-5E'S TO

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NIGERIA AND ASSURANCE OF SPARE PARTS SUPPLY AND; (C) POSSIBLE APPLICABILITY OF CONTE-LONG OR OTHER RESTRICTIVE AMENDMENTS BEARING ON AID ACTIVITY.

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